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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [XL](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR RAISES CARICOM LETTER WITH PM GONSALVES
AT NATIONAL DAY

REF: WHA-EMBASSY EMAIL OF 10/23

Classified By: A/DCM Ian Campbell, reasons 1.5 (b,d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) The Ambassador used the occasion of St. Vincent's National Day celebration to call Prime Minister Gonsalves to account over an inflammatory letter he sent to CARICOM leaders on September 24. In the letter, Gonsalves expressed support for irresponsible accusations by the Venezuelan Ambassador to St. Vincent about American involvement in alleged plots to assassinate Venezuelan president Chavez. The usually affable Gonsalves was visibly taken aback by the exchange - the planned 15 minute pull-aside went only 30 minutes, instead of the usual three hours he allocates for private conversations with the Ambassador. Despite getting the message this time, though, it is unlikely Gonsalves will change his public tune or his behavior in the foreseeable future. End summary.

¶2. (C) The Ambassador attended St. Vincent National Day events October 27, including both the National Day parade and a follow-on "Toast to the Nations" at the Prime Minister's residence. Gonsalves used his nationally-broadcast National Day speech at the parade to defend his foreign policy, noting the need for St. Vincent to reach out to non-traditional allies as support from traditional friends has slackened (but notably not making specific reference to Iran, with whom St. Vincent established relations earlier in the year). Gonsalves blamed a multitude of sins on outside forces, casting St. Vincent as the unwitting victim and attributing the U.S. and other "western capitalist" countries as chief culprits. He said the U.S. financial crisis is the primary reason for St. Vincent's sluggish economy, and blamed western capitalism for everything from global warming to oil prices to the presence of drugs and guns in St. Vincent - ignoring some rather obvious realities on many of these issues. He did, though, note the contributions of all of St. Vincent's benefactors, including the U.S. (after Australia and well behind Cuba, Venezuela, and Taiwan, among others). The Toast to the Nations following the parade was a less formal affair - and was not broadcast. At the Toast, the PM went on at great length about contributions of all the nations represented to St. Vincent's development, giving the U.S. rather more credit in the more private setting.

¶3. (C) Following the Toast, the Ambassador and Gonsalves met privately for about 30 minutes. The Ambassador raised the ref A points regarding the letter Gonsalves sent to CARICOM leaders on September 24, noting the USG's deep disappointment from an erstwhile friend in the region. The Ambassador asked Gonsalves pointedly why he would accept uncritically the accusations of a Venezuelan Ambassador who had been at his post less than four months (and whose name he could not even remember), without first seeking clarification from the U.S. Ambassador, a traditional partner, whom he has known for over two years. Gonsalves responded that the proof

he was shown by the Venezuelan was so "compelling" that he felt justified in penning the letter, but he could not recall any of the details of this compelling proof. He promised the Ambassador he would ask the Venezuelans to forward the information to him so he could send it to her. Gonsalves did his level best to evade and obfuscate throughout the conversation, turning the conversation to Bolivia, to Haiti under Aristide, and even to the U.S. elections. When it became clear that the Ambassador would not humor his endless digressions, and continued to return the conversation to his disappointing actions, Gonsalves tried to defend his support for the Venezuelan accusations by citing a history of U.S. government-sanctioned adventurism in the Caribbean dating back to the 1950's. the meeting ended shortly thereafter, with Gonsalves noting a need to get back to his constituents.

COMMENT

14. (C) Gonsalves was visibly rankled by this exchange - he was uncharacteristically unable to talk his way out of, or around, our displeasure over his irresponsible actions. He usually holds forth for hours with the Ambassador at every opportunity, making this meeting - at just 15 minutes past the scheduled time allotment - abrupt by his standards. He clearly received the message, but it is unlikely the exchange will lead to any more responsible behavior in the foreseeable future, as his National Day remarks reinforced.
OURISMAN